
Hurricane Dean gave Texas a chance to test readiness

FROM THIS SIDE

For an office that sits in the middle of Texas, we sure spend a lot of time eyeing the weather off the Gulf Coast. Or more specifically, we watch the waters that lie between our shore and Africa, watching for the next tropical wave that could become a hurricane. So far this year, we've been more than a little lucky. Here it is late October and although several storms have had the potential to hit the U.S. coast, none has.

In August, we were given the chance to test our hurricane readiness when Hurricane Dean looked poised to strike somewhere along our shores. This was the first time since Rita and Katrina that we activated the memorandum of agreements (MOAs) with EMS providers. Dean tested us like no drill could have. We are extremely grateful for those EMS providers and personnel who responded to our deployment requests. We have been working diligently to reimburse providers who responded. If you have any questions about that, please e-mail Phil Lockwood at phil.lockwood@dshs.state.tx.us.

Just before we went into hurricane prep mode, OEMS/TS was informed that there was also an MOA for EMS personnel to staff medical buses. We are still working out some details. However, we do know that EMS personnel need to have medical direction in order to work on a medical bus. In other words, a medical director needs to agree to allow the medic to work. We are working with our colleagues in the DSHS Community Preparedness division to revisit the structure of that MOA.

All in all, we were pleased with the way the new system worked. We've had several meetings both internally and with stakeholders to discuss improvements that can be made to the process and we hope to implement those before another hurricane threatens. A 'by the numbers' response for Hurricane Dean is on page 30. For more information on MOAs, go to www.dshs.state.tx.us/emstraumasystems.

Interested in serving on a GETAC committee? You could get your chance soon. The committees will be reshuffling their rosters early next year, as usual. About one-third of the committee slots are up for grabs annually. The process normally begins with an application posted to the GETAC website, and then GETAC Chair Ed Racht, MD, and Vice Chair Pete Wolf get together with the committee chairs to make decisions. Please watch our website for further details.

A big thanks from all of us goes to the Houston Fire Department and the South East Texas Trauma Regional Advisory Council for all their assistance in putting together EMS Conference 2007. We're greatly looking forward to seeing all of ya'll in the Bayou City in a few short weeks...



Steve Janda
Office of EMS/Trauma
Systems Coordination